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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: PODEMOS PARTY SHOWS SOME CONFIDENCE

REF: LA PAZ 198

Classified By: Amb. Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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11. (C) The Ambassador met with Podemos party Chairman and former President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, Senate Vice President Carlos Bohrt, Podemos senate leader Oscar Ortiz, and Podemos congressional leader Lourdes Millares on February 9. The group expressed satisfaction with the opposition's recent acquisition of the presidency of the senate (reftel), noted the many problems facing the GOB, and predicted that the GOB will face increasing tension after the Carnival holiday at the end of February. The senate election and a series of GOB missteps have given Podemos a sense of newfound confidence, but the party has yet to offer the public a viable alternative to the MAS, and continued personality conflicts between Tuto Quiroga and Samuel Doria Medina of the UN party continue to generate problems. End summary.

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THE OPPOSITION UNITES  
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12. (C) The Ambassador hosted the Podemos party leadership at a lunch on February 9. Party chairman and former President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, Senate Vice President Carlos Bohrt, Podemos senate leader Oscar Ortiz, and Podemos congressional leader Lourdes Millares attended the meeting. President Quiroga related that Senator Santos Ramirez "had no idea" that the opposition was going to acquire the presidency (reftel). Quiroga told the Ambassador that the Podemos/UN coalition is working in the senate, in part because Senate President and UN member Jose Villavicencio "is his own man" more than a UN hardliner. Carlos Bohrt said Podemos has a more difficult time working with the UN in the Constituent Assembly possibly, he argued, because UN party chairman Samuel Doria Medina's businesses are under constant threat of expropriation by the GOB.

13. (C) President Quiroga expressed satisfaction that the GOB was having a challenging January and February, particularly given that these two months are the best of the year for most governments given Bolivia's traditional Christmas bonus and vacations through Carnival. Quiroga added that the stalled Constituent Assembly is just one of many problems facing the GOB. Problems with the hydrocarbons nationalization contracts, resistance to mining industry reforms, and the return of mass protests to La Paz have made people start to think "this government is no better at solving the country's problems" than previous governments. "The MAS," Tuto said, "is starting to lose control of its cocalero base." Tuto predicted the GOB will face increased social tensions after the Carnival holiday, especially when government-union salary negotiations begin.

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COMMENT  
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14. (C) Tuto and those accompanying him displayed cautious optimism, and some new found self-confidence. Congresswoman Lourdes Millares said the enthusiasm from the opposition senate win has spread to the lower house. While Podemos and UN can take credit for gaining control of the senate, the problems facing the GOB are more the result of Morales' own missteps than political strategy by the opposition. A serious challenge for the opposition continues to be the deep mistrust and personality conflict between Tuto Quiroga and Samuel Doria Medina. End Comment.  
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